

Removing the Barrier between Practice and Non-Practice

I am fortunate because working as a psychotherapist, I frequently teach Mindfulness and meditation to others. This means that I get to do the practice a lot as I guide people through the process. I realize it's not the same as actually taking the time to sit alone or with others and practice for my own sake, but it is good to teach others anyway, and it does get me to Sit.

At times when I meet people who practice Mindfulness meditation - perhaps at a Conference, Workshop, Retreat or at a Networking support group I belong to, the question always comes up.....

“How often do you practice and for how long?”

I've noticed that everyone seems to squirm a little at this point, and I know – speaking for myself – that I actually get in touch with feelings of guilt that I SHOULD be able to practice more. I have even read statistics that make me feel guilty because they say that people practice 'X' number of times per week for 'X' hours a day and that just makes me shrink in dismay!

The whole thing seems to conspire against those of us who struggle with keeping up the practice, and seems to indicate that we are in some way failing or at least falling short in our attempts and duty to become more Mindful. Sometimes, I end up thinking

“I'm not worthy.....”.

or,

“If I'm not practicing as much as others, perhaps I should give up”.

But then every day I have clients and students I teach, come back to me and say the same as me, that because of this, that or the other reason, they too are not practicing enough, or not practicing at all.

I'm in no position to criticize them am I, because I'm just as bad! This by the way is me being judgmental – which I'm afraid is another Non-Mindful point against me (and there I go again adversely judging myself!).

My way through this Non-Doing drought and dilemma has been to try to develop a better understanding of Everyday Mindfulness, and to promote the practice of being more Mindful in all the routine everyday things we do. Asking, “How would it be possible to do whatever I'm doing right now in this moment.....more Mindfully?”

I am learning that there are many moments in the day that I could be more Mindful, and the challenge is how to be more aware of them so that I can experience them through all my SENSES as best I can.

I really want to continue to learn to be more Mindful and develop my practice in whatever ways I can,

Formal, Informal, Reading and Sharing experiences with others.

I'm not trying to avoid formal sitting practice, or dodge the issue, so much as admit to myself that despite my sincere efforts, it is not always happening as much as I would want it to.

So if like me, you have every good intention of practicing formally, and are sometimes falling short on the road, don't give up and feel that you're failing. Instead, pick yourself up and find as many ways as you can to be more Mindful in Everyday Life. I hope to inspire you to do this with Everyday Mindfulness.....and perhaps in the process, you'll find a way to get back to more regular formal practice too.

“When you practice half an hour of sitting meditation a day, that time should be for all twenty-four hours and not just for that half-hour. One smile, one breath, should be for the benefit of the whole day, not just for that moment. We must practice in a way that removes the barrier between practice and non-practice”.

Thich Nhat Hanh - *Peace is Every Step*